

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

ACDA-07 /067 W

----- 048649

R 011100Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9026

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MORG, MPOL, PINT, DM

SUBJ: REORGANIZATION OF BENINESE ARMED FORCES

1. SUMMARY: FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF BENIN'S "REVOLUTION" MARKED BY ANNOUNCEMENT OF DECISION TO ABOLISH EXISTING MILITARY STRUCTURE AND CREATE NEW UNIFIED PEOPLE'S ARMED FORCES. END SUMMARY.

1. SPEAKING ON OCTOBER 25, EVE OF FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF BENIN'S "GLORIOUS REVOLUTION", BENINESE PRESIDENT KEREKOU ANNOUNCED RADICAL RESTRUCTURING OF THE BENINESE MILITARY FORCES. STATING THAT TIME HAD COME TO SHAKE OFF LAST VESTIGES OF COLONIALISM AND NEO-COLONIALISM, KEREKOU DECLARED THAT REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL HAD DECIDED TO ABOLISH TRADITIONAL ARMED FORCES AND ESTABLISH TRI-PARTITE PEOPLE'S ARMED FORCES CONSISTING OF (1) A NATIONAL DEFENSE FORCE (2) A PUBLIC SECURITY FORCE AND (3) PEOPLE'S MILITIA. THE NATIONAL DEFENSE AND PUBLIC SECURITY FORCES WOULD BE MADE UP OF ELEMENTS DRAWN FROM THE FORMER LAND FORCES, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NATIONAL GENDARMERIE, STATE POLICE AND UNIFORMED

MEMBERS OF THE CUSTOMS, FORESTRY AND WATER, AND FIRE FIGHTING FORCES. STRUCTURE OF POPULAR MILITIA LEFT VAGUE WITH DEFINITION LIMITED TO THE "REVOLUTIONARY SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZATION OF THE PEOPLE UNDER ARMS." THREE BRANCHES OF MILITARY "AT ALL LEVELS" WILL BE UNDER CONTROL OF THE PARTY, ITS CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND ITS PRESIDENT, THE "SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE ARMIES."

2. KEREKOU ADDED THAT ONE OF IMMEDIATE TASKS OF THE NEW POPULAR ARMED FORCES WAS TO COOPERATE IN THE SENSITIZING, DEMYSTIFICATION, MOBILIZATION, ORGANIZATION AND REVOLUTIONARY EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE. HE DESCRIBED "SUICIDE AND REBIRTH" OF THE MILITARY AS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO BREAK FREE FROM MILITARY'S PREVIOUS COLONIAL AND NEO-COLONIAL ROLE OF SUPPRESSING THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS IN ORDER TO BENEFIT THE "ARROGANT MINORITY OF DEGENERATE CITIZENS HARBORED BY ALL CAPITALIST SOCIETIES AND WHICH AMONG US ARE KNOWN AS THE COMPRADOR POLITICO-BUREAUCRATIC BOURGEOISIE."

3. COMMENT: KEREKOU'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MILITARY REORGANIZATION IS MEANS OF LEGITIMIZING PROCESS WHICH HAS BEEN UNDERWAY SINCE 1975, WHEN HE DEPRIVED OFFICER CORPS OF MOST OF ITS AUTHORITY. SIMILARLY, CREATION OF PEOPLE'S MILITIA WAS DECIDED IN AUGUST, ONLY IMPLEMENTATION DATE WAS UNSPECIFIED. IF ANYTHING, DECISION WAS SOMEWHAT LESS RADICAL THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN ANTICIPATED SINCE IT TREATED MAKE-UP OF POPULAR MILITIA SO CURSORILY AS TO SUGGEST THAT IT MIGHT BE A LONG TIME BEFORE ARMS ARE PASSED OUT TO THE PEOPLE. GIVEN PUBLIC DISCONTENT OVER FOOD SHORTAGE, REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL MAY HAVE THOUGHT THIS NOT OPPORTUNE TIME TO ARM "TOILING MASSES."
THOMPSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMED FORCES, REORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 NOV 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976COTONO01756
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760406-0967
From: COTONOU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761194/aaaaddzd.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 JUN 2004 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <05 OCT 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REORGANIZATION OF BENINESE ARMED FORCES
TAGS: MORG, MPOL, PINT, DM, (KEREKOU, MATHEIU)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006